

Pile of money could buy rare 1870-S half dime

By Roger Boye

The only known 1870-S half dime will be sold at a New York auction on Sept. 9 for a price that could exceed \$400,000.

The coin's owner, Michigan dealer John Abbott, paid \$425,000 for the rarity during the market boom of 1980. The only other unique U.S. coin that was issued for general circulation, the 1870-S \$3 gold piece, fetched \$687,500 in a 1982 auction.

"Whatever [price] it brings, the new owner will have a fantastic numismatic treasure," said Karl Hirtzinger, managing director of Auctions by Bowers and Merena, Inc., which is conducting the sale. "No collection of half dimes . . . or U.S. coins . . . can be complete without it."

So far, the highest priced coin minted in the United States is a gold Brasher doubloon of 1787. The finest of seven known specimens sold for \$725,000 in a 1979 auction.

Uncle Sam issued half dimes—tiny silver coins worth five cents each—from 1794 until 1873. Their popularity waned following introduction in 1866 of the larger and easier-to-use nickel five-cent piece.

● Late this month Krause Publications will release what may prove to be the largest, most useful—and most expensive—hobby reference ever, the 1986 edition of "Standard Catalog of World Coins." The two-volume, 2,400-plus-page tome will include extensive price information for nearly every coin issued in the world since 1750.

The new 12th edition promises to be a marked improvement over last year's one-volume, 2,048-page effort. Among other things, the 1986 version is to be printed on a higher quality paper that will permit better reproductions of 45,000 coin photographs.

Persons ordering before the Sept. 27 release date should send a check for \$92.45 [which includes postage] to Krause Publications, 700 E. State St., Iola, Wis. 54990. Starting Sept. 27, the cost will be \$100 plus \$2.50 for postage and handling.

● As many as 120 coin dealers from at least 20 states will be selling their wares in Peoria later this week at the annual show of the Illinois Numismatic Association. Hours are 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sept. 8 in the ballroom of the Continental Regency Hotel, 500 Hamilton Blvd., Peoria. Admission is free.

The association, founded in 1949, is the only statewide organization of coin collectors in Illinois.